

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Please cancel claims 1-24.

Please enter new claims 25-34.

1-24 (canceled)

25. (new) An automated calling system, for allowing an operator to place a series of telephone calls to a plurality of customers, wherein the operator uses a telephony device to communicate with customers, the calling system comprising:

a switching device connected to a public switched telephone network, wherein the switching device is configured to selectively connect the operator's telephony device to one of a plurality of telephone lines; and

a processor coupled to and controlling the switching device, wherein the processor is configured to:

- (a) automatically place a telephone call to a customer using a telephone line, and to cause the switching device to connect the operator's telephony device to the telephone line as the telephone call is being placed, in response to an operator's command selecting the customer;
- (b) automatically place a new telephone call to a new customer using a new telephone line, and to cause the switching device to connect the operator's telephony device to the new telephone line as the new telephone call is being placed, in response to an operator's command selecting the new customer, and
- (c) repeat (a) and (b) to allow the operator to place a series of telephone calls to a plurality of customers;

wherein the operator can listen as the calls are placed so that the operator can immediately talk to a customer if the customer answers a call.

26. (new) The system of claim 25, further comprising an audio device configured to record and play audio recordings, wherein the processor is configured to cause the switching device to connect the audio device to the telephone line and to cause the audio device to play a pre-recorded audio message over the telephone line.

27. (new) The system of claim 26, wherein the processor is configured so that, in response to an operator command, the processor will cause the audio device to play a pre-recorded audio message over the telephone line at the same time that the new telephone call is placed to the new customer over the new telephone line such that the operator can speak with the new customer over the new telephone line at the same time the pre-recorded audio message is played over the telephone line.
28. (new) The system of claim 26, wherein the processor and audio device are configured so that if the operator commands a pre-recorded audio message to be played over the telephone line to a customer's answering service, the pre-recorded audio message is not played until a greeting generated by the customer's answering service has ended.
29. (new) The system of claim 25, wherein the processor is configured to place a telephone call to the operator's telephony device over the public switched telephone network, and wherein the switching device is configured to connect to the operator's telephony device to selected ones of the plurality of telephone lines using the public switched telephone network.
30. (new) The system of claim 25, wherein the switching device and the operator's telephony device are connected to a network, and wherein the switching device is configured to connect the operator's telephony device to selected ones of the plurality of telephone lines via the network.
31. (new) A method for allowing an operator to conduct a series of customer telephone calls using a calling system, wherein the operator communicates with customers using an operator telephony device that is selectively connected to a plurality of telephone lines of a public switched telephone network, the method comprising:

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- (a) automatically placing a telephone call to a customer over a telephone line, and connecting the operator's telephony device to the telephone line as the telephone call is being placed so that the operator can immediately talk to the customer if the customer answers, in response to an operator command selecting the customer;
- (b) automatically placing a new telephone call to a new customer over a new telephone line, and connecting the operator's telephony device to the new telephone line as the new telephone call is being placed so that the operator can immediately talk to the new customer if the new customer answers, in response to an operator command selecting the new customer;
- (c) playing a pre-recorded audio message over the telephone line at the same time the new telephone call is placed so that the pre-recorded audio message is played over the telephone line at the same time the operator is talking with the new customer over the new telephone line;
- (d) repeating (a) - (c) to allow the operator to place a series of telephone calls to a plurality of customers.

32. (new) A computer readable medium storing a set of instructions for a computer based calling system connected to multiple telephone lines of a public switched telephone network, the instructions configuring the calling system to provide an operator having a telephony device with automated calling functions, wherein the instructions configure the calling system to execute a series of steps, comprising:

- (a) automatically calling a customer on a telephone line, and connecting the operator's telephony device to the telephone line as the telephone call is being placed so that the operator can immediately talk to the customer if the customer answers the telephone call, in response to an operator command selecting the customer;
- (b) automatically calling a new customer on a new telephone line, and connecting the operator's telephony device to the new telephone line as the new telephone call is being placed so that the operator can immediately

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talk to the new customer if the new customer answers the telephone call, in response to an operator command selecting the new customer;

(c) playing a pre-recorded audio message over the telephone line at the same time the new telephone call is placed so that the operator can talk to the new customer over the new telephone line at the same time the audio message is played on the telephone line; and

(d) repeating (a) - (c) to allow the operator place a series of telephone calls to a plurality of customers.

33. (new) The computer readable medium of claim 32, wherein the instructions configure the calling system to place a telephone call to the operator's telephony device over the public switched telephone network, and wherein the instructions configure the calling system to connect the operator's telephony device to selected ones of the plurality of telephone lines via the public switched telephone network.

34. (new) The computer readable medium of claim 32, wherein the instructions configure the calling system to communicate with the operator's telephony device over a network, and wherein the instructions configure the calling system to connect the operator's telephony device to selected ones of the plurality of telephone lines via the network.